

**Abstract**

Apparatus (10) for helping to protect an occupant of a vehicle includes an inflatable vehicle occupant protection device (14) inflatable between the vehicle side structure (16) and a vehicle occupant. The device (14) defines an inflatable volume (58) that includes a forward portion (64) and a rearward portion (66). An inflation fluid source (24) is in fluid communication with a fill tube (22) and provides helium inflation fluid for inflating the device (14). The fill tube (22) includes outlet apertures (100) that direct the inflation fluid into the inflatable volume to inflate the device (14) initially to a first pressure and maintain the device inflated above a second pressure for a predetermined time. The inflation fluid directed into the inflatable volume (58) has a temperature and a pressure that are generally the same in the forward and rearward portions (64 and 66) during initial inflation of the device. The temperature is about equal to an ambient temperature in which the inflatable vehicle occupant protection device is inflated for at least 95% of the predetermined time.

100-55150-00000

5

10

15

20